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Peking Cuts Back On "News" Sources

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HONG KONG — The Chinese Communist authorities have clamped down on the distribution of newspapers and other publications to foreign diplomats and correspondents based in Peking in an apparent effort to control information about China reaching the outside world.

The decision, made late last month, limits foreigners in the Chinese capital to the *Peoples Daily*, the official Communist organ and the *Kwangming Daily*, a virtual facsimile of the Party journal. Also within bounds are the New China News Agency and Peking Radio as well as magazines especially concocted for foreign consumption, like the glossy *China Pictorial* and the *Peking Review*, which mostly reprints turgid ideological pronouncements.

Currently on the index, however, are such newspapers as the *Peking Daily*, which speaks for the Revolutionary Committee in the capital, and the *Wen Hui Pao*, published in Shanghai.

It is now illegal, too, for aliens in China to read the myriad tabloids, tracts and pamphlets put out by assorted Red Guard organizations in Peking and throughout the provinces. These unofficial Red Guard sheets were particularly candid in their disclosures of local problems, many of them having vividly described the turmoil that has nagged China during the Cultural Revolution. Mao Tse-tung's ambitious campaign to purify the country.

Oddly enough, the newspaper blackout was first imposed on the Soviet Embassy and the Tass agency bureau in Peking last February. A Russian request for the resumption of subscriptions to provincial journals was formally rejected by the Chinese.

THIS ATTEMPT to manage the news has not been wholly successful, since regional radio broadcasts monitored in Hong Kong and elsewhere still reveal the political tensions that continue to harass China.

But the drive to restrict the flow of information is itself considered by specialists here to be significant. For it suggests that moderate Chinese civilian and military leaders are trying to improve China's tarnished reputation abroad.

These leaders are evidently striving, therefore, to promote the impression that the country has attained a degree of unity — even though available evidence indicates that China is still beset by serious internal stresses and strains.

A sign of this trouble has been reflected in the fact that the provinces, judging from their radio broadcasts, have not responded uniformly to the results of the 12th plenary session of the Communist Central Committee, which ended on October 31.

That meeting, presided over by Mao himself, proclaimed the expulsion from all posts "both inside and outside the party" of Liu Shao-chi, China's chief of state. Beyond that, though, the final communique was essentially characterized by its omissions and ambiguities.

For example, it referred only in passing to the "Cultural Revolution Group," the instrument that Mao's wife, Chiang Ching, and other extremists have used to spearhead the campaign to purge China's ossified Communist Party apparatus. Moreover, it omitted any mention of the Red Guards and other leftist activists who were supposed to have been in the forefront of the Cultural Revolution.

Nor did the communique contain even an inkling of the "important speeches" that were delivered at the plenary session by Mao and his purported heir apparent, Marshal Lin Biao. Instead, the final statement to emerge from the plenum mainly repeated the line that the working class must exercise leadership and that a refurbished Communist Party organization should find "fresh blood" in the ranks of the "proletariat."

THE RELATIVELY subdued tone of the statement contrasted sharply with the 16-point communique that came out of an earlier Central Committee plenum in August, 1966, when Mao accelerated his Cultural Revolution.

Among other exhortations, the 1966 communique announced that "all the truths of Marxism can be summed up in one sentence — to rebel if justified." And that slogan served to justify the Red Guards as they began their rampages.

Reacting to the latest pronouncement, though, a few areas have evidently sought to act as if the Cultural Revolution is still in full swing. In particular, the radical Shanghai Radio has continued to call for the perpetuation of the Revolution, demanding that the "masses" supervise developments.

But for the most part, the majority of the provinces, which are under military rule, have been content to focus their propaganda against Liu Shao-chi while implying that the army-run Revolutionary Committees exercise power to the exclusion of Mao's extremist partisans.

Thus the division in the country is basically between the handful of Maoists who want more revolution, and a variety of moderates anxious to maintain order and avoid fresh outbreaks of the kind that have torn China for the past two years. The key difference now, however, is that the struggle is largely being hidden from the outside world by the ban on all but official sources of information. Yet the struggle is going on, even if it is taking place in the shadows.